

Meeting Minutes

THE ADVISORY BOARD TO THE STATE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION (SEC) ON CERTIFICATION FOR OPERATORS OF PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

Tuesday, March 13th, 2007, 10:45 am
Harrah's Reno
219 N. Center Street, Reno NV 89501
Sammy's Casino Showroom

All items designated with an asterisk () on this agenda are items upon which the Advisory Board may take action. Agenda items may be taken out of the order presented at the discretion of the chairman.*

1. CALL TO ORDER (Chairman Darrin Price)

2. ROLL CALL (Secretary Cameron McKay)

Darrin Price, Cameron McKay, Marcellus Jones, Harvey Johnson, Chet Auckly, Lynn Forsberg (present); Marie Pollack (absent)

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

4. *APPROVAL OF MINUTES — September 21st, 2006 Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2006 was made and seconded, and passed unanimously.

5. *Election of Officers

Chairman Price stated that historically the vice-chairman has moved up to become chairman. Marie Pollack, current vice-chairman was not present, and he noted that she had retired from the water business. There was discussion of whether Ms. Pollack would continue to be active on the board, but she had not been in contact recently. After further discussion, there was a **Motion** by Mr. Auckly to nominate Cameron McKay as chairman and the motion was seconded, and carried unanimously.

Mr. McKay now made a **Motion** to nominate Marcellus Jones as Vice-chair and Harvey Johnson as Secretary "as a slate," and after a second, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McKay now assumed the gavel as Chairman for the balance of the meeting.

6. Update on Wastewater Advisory Board meeting and programs- General Discussion

Wastewater Advisory Board is working on Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) for wastewater treatment operators. Also been speaking with NWEA and NDEP about whether Certification Board is staying with NWEA or going to be taken on NDEP. NWEA voted in favor of keeping affiliated with NWEA. Chairman asked if any indication that Wastewater Advisory Board will make certification mandatory? Answer—treatment requires mandatory certification through NDEP now, collection side not on the immediate horizon. That Board meets again in April. Darrin Price asked about the SEC and if any discussion had taken place about this, and the answer was no. The SEC would look for an update on the tasks and actions of this board, and John Walker, SEC Executive Secretary, recommended that the present board look to a September SEC meeting to give that update.

7. Update on higher level (Grades III and IV) education and training in Nevada (Beth Kang, AWWA California-Nevada)

Ms. Kang said that while training has gone fairly well in southern Nevada, some training in northern Nevada has been cancelled for lack of participants, since it's not practical to do on-site training with one or two participants. She mentioned possible online training. She stated that they're trying to publicize and schedule classes through email and website. Chairman McKay mentioned college-credit backflow classes that are needed, and that backflow education programs need to be written by a certified tester. Ms. Kang noted that their April conference will be an opportunity to get feedback from members. She said that, going forward, they will be concentrating on opportunities for backflow training. Mr. Auckley asked if SRF money could subsidize training, and the answer was possibly, since it could go through the contractor to produce training material.

There was further discussion of operator reimbursement—Dana Pennington of NDEP noted that SRF funded scholarship for Nevada Rural Water Conference. There followed a discussion of video conferencing as a way to bring training to rural operators, especially through the UNR and community college system. Dana Pennington also discussed the desirability of more classes in backflow; the classes are sometimes full of people from California and private industry. Mr. Price asked if video conferencing would meet requirements, and Ms. Kang said that there are ways, with proctors and so on. Mr. Price asked for a report on this at the next meeting, which Ms. Kang said she would prepare. There was discussion about how many students must be in a class for it to pay for itself, and Ms. Kang said that they'll be analyzing that, it could be ten, but it depends

on various factors. College accredited courses are different than one-day workshops.

8. Discussion on special testing possibilities outside of already set quarterly testing schedule, plus the possible use of online testing.

It was asked of Ms. Kang if testing in California is quarterly only and she said that theoretically you can write exams at any time, but they tried to stick to the testing cycle. Several board members noted that Nevada was sticking to quarterly because it was a matter of personnel and resources. Mr. Johnson spoke about how online testing could simplify the whole process, allow testing at any time and that for example, nurses in Arizona were now testing online. He wondered if there had been any consideration of the feasibility for water operator testing. He noted that the testing can be done through H&R Block offices, using their computers. He wanted to know if it might be feasible. Mr. Price noted that online scared him a little bit.

Mr. Jones said the Las Vegas Valley Water District has asked Cal-Nevada AWWA to provide their test, because those operators must be certified by November 2008, and they've given one test already (outside of the quarterly tests). Ms. Kang confirmed that this was the first time they'd tested outside the quarterly cycle. There was discussion that the ideal was to have the exam right after the college accredited classes while retention of material was highest. Mr. Price said the important point was whether Ms. Kang would be able to set up classes outside the quarterly cycle if only a small number of northern Nevada students were attending. She said that she would look into it but yes, her personal bias was that there was a need there. She would bring it up with the certification board.

Mr. McKay asked what would be the problem with using videoconferencing for the class, then going into Reno, for example, just for one day for the exam?

Mr. Jones had one more item, the concern that the rules for taking the exam for Cal-Nevada were "above and beyond" the rules for the State of Nevada. Mr. Price said that if they wanted to test outside of the quarterly cycle they would have to meet those criteria. He noted that occasional special requests, not overwhelming in number, have been granted in Nevada in the past when a deadline was approaching for required certification. Mr. Jones noted the difference for the Grade 1 and 2 three-day course and that two individuals had passed the Nevada test but not the Section test and were not given their certifications. There was discussion about the differences between the exams. Mr. Jones clarified that the two individuals had passed the certification test, but not the "class" test. Apparently you couldn't take the necessary state test without taking the class. Ms. Kang said it needed to be worked out so that people could have the opportunity to be accommodated. But her board needed to look at this. She would find out what all the options are.

Mr. Price summed up that there seemed to be two questions, the differences in the testing criteria, and funding for reimbursement for special testing. He and Mr. Jones would express these concerns at the section conference. There was discussion of scheduling conflicts during the present conference.

9. Update of certified proctors for CA-NV AWWA exams. (Geoff DaForno)

Mr. DaForno reported that there are not as many proctors as he would like; he's making efforts to educate potential proctors on what's required, which would make it easier to recruit them. Proctor training at next year's conference? Ms. Kang said they would do it. It was noted what a good opportunity Rural Water Conference is to build number of proctors in outlying areas. Mr. Price asked for total number of proctors—answer, about 12. It was confirmed that it's a one-time training. There some information on the Cal-Nevada website; Ms. Kang said she'd put notice on website front page when a training came up. Mr. Walker of the SEC said that if provided one, he would post a link on SEC website as well.

10. Discussion on delays in receiving renewal of operator certification.

A number of people who sent their recertification paperwork in December didn't receive the certificate until mid-February. Steve Brockway of NDEP said that the problem is with the software. The certificates have to be processed as a group after all have been received—they can't be done singly or a few at a time. The Board expressed amazement at this. Options like emailing to let operators know if they passed, even if the card won't come for awhile, were discussed. The computer problem will be looked into. The Board asked for an update at the next meeting.

11. Staff Reports

1) Doug Zimmerman—Testing contract with AWWA was renewed. Streamlined process for invoicing. Lew Dodgion appointed new Chairman of the SEC. No known legislation on the drinking water side at State Legislature. Arsenic exemption process seems to be working well. Coordination of future meetings now through SEC staff.

2) Steve Brockway—Said that he'd covered most of his issues already. Asked if he could proctor a special-needs exam without the one-day training—answer from Board was yes.

3) Geoff DaForno—Noted that water quality testing was the biggest stumbling block throughout the grades.

It was noted that Dana Pennington was retiring this fall and the Board thanked him for his good work and professionalism. A new federal EPA officer, Sara Jacobs, will also be in her job soon.

It was noted by "Rick" from the audience that on the treatment side there doesn't seem to be a clear list from AWWA of exactly what the source materials are for tests—people are studying books that don't have the information on the tests, and no one seems to have the information. The treatment side is "in progress" and that doesn't help with the pass rate. Mr. Smith noted that in the past if one failed a test they would be provided with references where the answers were, but that's no longer provided.

Mr. Price thanked Geoff DaForno for the work he's done on the testing process and the great job he's done.

There was discussion of pass rates on the recent exams, because certain information on the statistics was missing—Ms. Kang said she'd be sending it by email.

12. * Schedule next meeting

After discussion with John Walker of the SEC it was decided to have the next meeting via videoconference through the community college system. The date was set for June 15, 2007. Mr. Walker will coordinate with Crystel Montecinos.

Motion—it was moved and seconded, and carried unanimously, that the next meeting of the Board will be June 15, 2007.

13. * Meeting Adjournment

Motion—it was moved and seconded, and carried unanimously, that the meeting be adjourned.